

- 273
[562] to procure stout and brandy (ostensibly a general purpose medicine in this case)
273 in disguised containers to be consumed at home. The drinking of the men takes
275 place, for the most part, in the pubs and at parties, and seldom is it indulged in to
[133] the extent that the imbibers become physically incapacitated. There were no cases
[164] of alcoholism in Inis Beag during 1959, according to the nurse. Although drinking
obviously is done to combat depression and boredom, dissolve feelings of shyness
and inferiority, alleviate the sense of sin and guilt, and overcome secretiveness
which limits extroversion, the folk defend the practice by claiming that it makes
them more articulate and convivial and thus better able to sing, dance, converse
with one another, and tell stories. The often used phrases "to give us courage" and
273 "great gas" connote just these benefits. In Ireland today, there are nearly half-a-
575 million members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society—founded in that country
125 years ago—who have "taken the pledge" not to drink spirits in any form; they
wear a small badge shaped like a shield which bears the emblem of the Sacred Heart.
Twelve "Pioneers" in Inis Beag have taken a lifetime pledge and about 30 others
[561] a two year pledge not to imbibe. Most of these persons are old men, women, and
[626] boys. Young and middle-aged men who are members of the society are the objects
of a good deal of indirect ridicule and direct jesting.

Folklore

- 177
178 As a result of acculturation, the Inis Beag esthetic tradition today is not
53 nearly so rich as it was two generations ago, nor has it ever been as rich as those
found in many other peasant areas of Ireland. The principal esthetic forms are
folklore, music, and dance; lacking are the graphic and plastic arts, and of the
crafts already considered only the knitting of ganzzies, the crocheting of shawls,
and *cior* making transcend sheer utility in their manufacture, according to the
538 evaluation of island artisans. Myths, legends, folktales, and anecdotes among prose
narratives, and song texts and proverbs, are the predominant genres of oral litera-
ture. There is no drama, while poetry, riddles, and jokes seldom are recited.
114 "Along the western shores of Ireland and Scotland . . . is preserved the
171 oldest vernacular literature in Europe, north and west of the Alps. Along this
538 tattered cultural frontier . . . [are] the last remnants of the most venerable body of
178 orally preserved tradition in western Europe" (Delargy 1957:178). The Inis Beag
124 folk share this body of folklore, and storytelling always has loomed large in the
lives of the people. However, it had disappeared formally from the island by the
time that my wife and I came, and we were never able to attend a traditional
storytelling session, but had to reconstruct its institutionalized characteristics by
638 plumbing the memory of one of the two aged narrators still alive. There are two
types of Irish storytellers: the *seolais*, who recounts myths and legends of the
mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and historical cycles, as well as ancient folktales; and
the *seanchais*, "who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies,
social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short
realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings (Delargy 1943:6).
[562] In Inis Beag, the former type of storyteller was always male and the latter usually

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562 recess play and movement to and from school. During church services,
834 there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys
[858] and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. The
[864] pubs are frequented only by men or by women tourists and female
teachers who have spent several years on the mainland while training
and thus are "set apart" (and, of course, by inquisitive female ethnogra-
[443] phers). Women occasionally visit the shops to procure groceries, but it is
more common for them to send their children to do so, since supplies and
drinks are proffered across the same counter, and men are usually to be
found on the premises. Even on the strand during summer months, male
[484] tourists tend to bathe at one end and women at the other. Some swimmers
[526] "daringly" change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses—
[291] a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which has overtones of sexual
[832] catharsis.
[184]

154 It is often asserted that the major "escape valve" of sexual frustra-
[839] tion among single persons in Ireland is masturbation; frustration-aggres-
[278] sion theorists, however, would stress the ubiquity of drinking, alcoholism,
[733] disputes, and pugnacity as alternative outlets. Pugnacity can also be
[578] linked to the widespread problem of male identity. Our study revealed
that male masturbation in Inis Beag seems to be common, premarital
83 coitus unknown, and marital copulation limited as to foreplay and the
584 manner of consummation. My wife and I never witnessed courting—
"walking out"—in the island. Elders proudly insist that it does not occur,
832 but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on
"petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the "bolder" of them
kiss and fondle outside of their clothing. Island girls, it is held by their
[771] "lovers," do not confess these sins because they fail to experience
[626] pleasure from the contact. The male perpetrators also shun the con-
[783] fessional because of their fear of the priest.

833 We were unable to determine the frequency of marital coitus. A
considerable amount of evidence indicates that privacy in the act is
stressed and that foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the
lower body, especially the buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated
[291] by the husband. Only the male superior position is employed; intercourse
takes place with underclothes not removed; and orgasm, for the man, is
[12] achieved quickly, almost immediately after which he falls asleep. (I
must stress the provisional nature of these data, for they are based on a
limited sample of respondents and relate to that area of sexual behavior
least freely discussed.)

000 Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies,